

CAMERA SHY CHINESE CAPTURED AT LAST BY THE MOVIES



The Shanghai Company in a religious picture.



Typical movie interior and native actors.

The Introduction of the Photo Play Into China a Story of Human Nature in the Orient

NOT quite seven years ago there was hardly a motion picture playhouse in all China with its 450,000,000 souls. To-day there are more than 100 such theatres in the interior cities and in the treaty ports. This is only a handful as compared with movies in the United States and other countries, but the growth, small as it may seem, represents a really remarkable development when one considers the slow growth of modern civilization in the Far East.

The man who is responsible, more than any one else, for the introduction of the cinema in China is Benjamin Brodsky, a Jew by descent, a Chinaman by habit and education, and an American hustler by choice. Behind the statement that there are only 100 movie houses in all the vast territory of China, however, there lies a story of more than ordinary interest.

Mr. Brodsky, who at one time had almost a monopoly of the motion picture business in China, originally conceived the idea of importing American made films for the edification and amusement of the natives. He was the Eastern representative of a film manufacturing company in San Francisco, through which he obtained the Far Eastern rights to operate, not only in China, but in Japan and the Philippine Islands.

But it didn't work, says Mr. Brodsky. The average Chinaman would have nothing to do with American films. All the best features in the world could not tempt the native to the movies for a single evening. They didn't understand the American story and besides that they were afraid of the camera. That is they were afraid of the camera.

How was the difficulty to be overcome? It took several years to do it. Instead of importing American made films, Mr. Brodsky got his own man, and began to take motion pictures of scenes in interior China. These pictures were what is known in our movie houses as "topical reviews." Still the native was afraid. Mr. Brodsky set up a ramshackle theatre in one of the interior towns and tried to get the Chinese to come to see his pictures. They refused point blank. Then he hit on a plan to pay his audience to come to his theatre. He announced that all those who were willing to sit through an evening's performance would be paid so much money in coin.

The first time this happened a handful of the more courageous of the community, dazzled perhaps by the thought of the money, threw superstition to the winds and came to see the show. They got their money and went home more than satisfied. They spread the news of the movie among their neighbors and the next night a somewhat larger crowd gathered. There were also paid.

It was necessary to keep this procedure in force for weeks. Then finally one evening Mr. Brodsky got a pretty good sized audience to see the entertainment for nothing. He did not pay them cash. This kept on for some time and at last some of those Chinamen who had originally been "bribed" to attend the show, feeling conscience stricken at having accepted the money for the privilege of having an undisturbed good time, came to the theatre and returned the money they had received before in payment of an admission fee.

After that the way became a little easier, although the path of the motion picture manufacturers was beset with many troubles. In the end, however, it was set up a regular standard of admission which varied from a few cents of our money to what would amount to \$1.50. This latter amount was paid only by the wealthy or aristocratic class.

The original experiment proving so successful, Mr. Brodsky undertook to get some of the natives interested in the manufacture of pictures. In the treaty ports of Hongkong and Shanghai the movies had obtained patronage mostly through the foreign population, but there was still a big field in this immense nation for spreading the industry elsewhere.

About three years ago there was organized the China Cinema Company, Ltd. It was operated by Mr. Brodsky as general manager and a consulting

committee consisting of prominent merchants of Shanghai, Canton, Hongkong and Peking as follows:

Kim Lou-ey O'Hoy, Daniel Fong, Ma Tat Chiu, Louis Chui, Fong Fu Yiu, Fong Fu Gao, U Kau Pui, Lee Hung Man and Lo Sing Fok. Mr. Chung Wun, a banker of Hongkong, financed the project in part.

This was only the beginning. Now the company owns and operates 100 theatres and has its own company of actors, numbering 300. One of the theatres holds 15,000 persons. Five thousand of them sit down and 10,000 standing up, are packed in like sardines in a box. There are no fire laws in China as regards motion picture theatres, and there is no National Board of Censors or any other kind of censor. In fact, there is hardly any official interference in the conduct of the industry, for the average Chinaman knows little about it.

"After we got our company organized," said Mr. Brodsky to THE SUN reporter, (and that was a big task in itself, as the Chinaman, while willing to accept bribes, could hardly be persuaded to go further), "we were faced with the difficulty of making them act. As I have said, they did not care for American stories because they do not seem to understand the plots, and they desired to act their own stories for themselves. Most of their scenarios were of a historical or religious nature. A great many of our company balked, how-

ever, when it came to standing up before the camera. "Dire threats of instant death and all kinds of torture were necessary in many cases to persuade our actors to act. We had enlisted the cooperation of the Governor of the various provinces of the Chinese States, and it was

through their action that we were, in a measure, successful. Whenever we came across a rebellious member of the company, and when all our threats of instant death were futile, our chief of the State to the effect that his head would be cut off if he

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Chinese movie stars in an exciting scene in "The Three Thieves."

WHERE BOHEMIA FEASTED IN BYGONE DAYS

The Pig's Knuckle Joint Recalls City Restaurants Once Frequented and Made Famous by Brilliant Men and Women

By DAVID A. CURTIS.

ONE subject only engages the more or less serious attention of every human being at least twice every twenty-four hours, for if there be any who eat only once a day, it is beyond reason to suppose that it is from lack of desire.

So, fixing the minimum of meals for the normal man or woman at two per diem, it is plain that one of these is the dinner. It is upon his dinner that man spends more of his income than for anything else, unless indeed he has more of an income than is really conducive to his best welfare.

"Watch your mouth," said Benjamin Franklin in a violent effort to rank Lord Bacon as the wisest and the meanest of mankind, "for down that little red lane runs more money than anywhere else." And why not? What is money for?

You may dine for very little money, even though you be not invited to dine as some one's guest. You may go, for example, to the Pig's Knuckle joint, over by Eighth avenue. Here the high cost of living is a fantastic dream that will not trouble you, since the indigestion that breeds dreams lurks not in the toothsome morsel that gives the place its name, nor even in the savory sauerkraut served with it.

It is not compulsory that you shall buy beer to wash it down, though, indeed, the main industry is the sale of beer. It is good beer, too, and if you chance to have a quarter in your pocket you will not begrudge spending the surplus dime for it after paying for the dinner. The proprietor is well entitled to make a profit on something, and the waiter will forego his tip good naturedly enough. He knows the pinch of poverty well, though he does not feel it.

It is a delicious place. The walls of the old clothes man here when the easy money of other nights is not available enjoy no such latitude of behavior as is reckoned regular enough in more pretentious places, and the waiting here is always watchful. They behave themselves, or if they find that they are not personally, they will likely it may be, but certainly and very quickly.

The motley gathering in the rough shed that was once a back yard is not exacting in requirements of costume. It is not even fastidious as to manners, for boisterous repartees from the waiter may be expected and will be unrebuked, but even the well to do parties that are attracted by the excellence of the viands, regardless of the price, venture no impropriety.

The Pig's Knuckle Joint is a survival. Doubtless there are many others in the byways of the great city, known only to the fortunate few and non-existent even to many who pride

themselves on their knowledge of out of the way places, but in the older day like eating places were easy to find. The trouble was then, as it is now, that once they were found and crowded thronged them, and their charms disappeared.

There is still one survivor of the notable group that made the Knuckle joint famous, though even "Willie" Winter might have trouble in finding it now, and George Arnold and Harry Clapp, and Fitz-James O'Brien and Ada Clare and all his other comrades have long been feasting in Walhalla. Rheumatism!

Since then how many groups of brilliant men and women have enjoyed their brief immortality? And since they, no less than others, ate and drank, they gathered at this and that tavern as Doctor Johnson sat in a room with his friends, lending lustre to the place and sometimes enriching the owner of it. There was a basement dining room in University place years ago where three of the greatest men in New York feasted habitually. Frank Saltus, Gus de Livaudais and Jim Connelly—Big Jim they called him—collectively weighed half a ton, but they carried no fatty deposits in their heads. Giants they were among the intellectuals, acclaimed mightily by the wits and rhymerists of the day, who clustered around the huge table that ran the length of the room till they overflowed the premises. And no man criticized the fare or quarrelled with the price thereof. It was a German place like the other two, and beer was the staple, food being merely a necessity to be provided casually on the side, as it were, and served the landlord only as a means of attracting

customers, somewhat as the free lunch draws trade to the corner saloon, but not in the dubious free lunch way. There came the red ink period before the public learned of the excellence and small cost of native wines and when the label on the bottle was held to be the all sufficient guarantee of the contents. French and Italian took up the idea with a twist, and utilized the drink to foster their business of selling food. Bohemia hailed the table d'hôte with enthusiasm and festivals at 50 cents per became the rage. Since half a dollar was then a considerable sum to be expended on one meal, the caterers introduced little luxuries as provocations to extravagance and presently succeeded in fixing that amount as the smallest which any self-respecting adventurer would devote to his dinner. One of the initial steps in this direction was taken in South Fifth avenue when aristocracy still abided in Washington Square, a single block away. Three oysters on the half shell were served as the introduction to a dinner, which straightway drew crowds to the little restaurant.

Billy Fales, already recognized as the reigning prince in the Bohemia of that day, discovered it, as he afterward discovered every outre eating place in this city, and he led his bodyguard thither from the hive in Eighth street, where they had beds. After them came the countless aspirants for a foothold in the shadowy kingdom, till that place, too, was swamped.

One earlier effort to reestablish the vagabond realm, whose capital was Paff's, must not be forgotten. Tender memories remain in many minds of the courtly, gifted, gallant gentleman who had a bare room with tables and chairs in West Third street who did a smashing trade for a season. If her motherly nature had not inhibited the criminal she might be in business to-day, in which case there would be one more place in New York where Bohemia of that day, discovered it, as he afterward discovered every outre eating place in this city, and he led his bodyguard thither from the hive in Eighth street, where they had beds. After them came the countless aspirants for a foothold in the shadowy kingdom, till that place, too, was swamped.

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we knew as Alcegon S. Sullivan, and of the boundless hospitality with which he entertained the impetuous free-lances of his time at the little restaurant in Twelfth street, just off Broadway, till some unhappy night suggested the establishment of the Serbians Club.

Sullivan was rich. A house was taken and furnished in Eleventh street and the roster of the club was full in a single night. Then revelry. There are still survivors, though the club perished untimely from Sullivan's prosperity, and Bohemia looked no longer for an abiding place. And then came the war, and the club was no more. Sullivan was rich. A house was taken and furnished in Eleventh street and the roster of the club was full in a single night. Then revelry. There are still survivors, though the club perished untimely from Sullivan's prosperity, and Bohemia looked no longer for an abiding place. And then came the war, and the club was no more.

"Sometimes," he added, chuckling again, "this had for the wall." Roosevelt achievements, notable and numerous as they be, are sometimes forgotten, but the Potluck Picnic will never be. Nobody ever died anywhere else, at any time, as did those who gathered once a year at Robert B. Roosevelt's house, each bringing something for the feast, which was supposed to be of his or her cooking. Joseph Miller one year cooked the coffee and after we tasted it we wondered no longer at the rockiness of the Western man. As individual choice was unrestricted and as each of the hundred or more who came brought enough of something to feed the others, the spread was weird and bewildering.

I remember that one year our host served an enormous bowl of head and served it with all the pomp of the Middle Ages. The company was of the very aristocracy of Bohemia. My own contribution that year was a case of American wines and it was a hit. They were little known in New York then, but big Ed Emerson, now a United States senator, together with his father, now of the majority, had opened a restaurant in Nassau street to introduce them.

But there must be another pause. One forgets chronology in the rush of memories, and for the moment the Potluck Picnic had slipped one's mind. There was a most capable cook who had a bare room with tables and chairs in West Third street who did a smashing trade for a season. If her motherly nature had not inhibited the criminal she might be in business to-day, in which case there would be one more place in New York where Bohemia of that day, discovered it, as he afterward discovered every outre eating place in this city, and he led his bodyguard thither from the hive in Eighth street, where they had beds. After them came the countless aspirants for a foothold in the shadowy kingdom, till that place, too, was swamped.

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First Audiences Paid to Come to the Theatre--Chinese Now Turn Out Their Own Films

narious, of murder, poisoning and sudden death, and what is more, they were just as well satisfied to act it out in reality as to stage the picture. If you had, for instance, a picture in which an execution or something of a similar nature was the central point, it was just as easy to get a picture of a real honest to goodness execution as to get a stage execution. Sometimes, in fact, it was easier. And we had a hard time to keep the Governors of some of these uncivilized States from trotting out a convicted criminal and cutting his head off on the spot while the Chinese came man ground away on the machine with every evidence of delight.

"As for pictures depicting duels: that was the easiest thing imaginable. In every community there were fairs galore between numbers of opposing factions and it was no task at all to get two men who were bitter enemies to stand up and blaze away at each other with revolvers or to fight a bitter battle with Chinese knives. But as I have said, this was the exception rather than the rule, and we tried our best to avoid it as much as possible, for the same reason."

The headquarters of the company was first located in Hongkong. There were branches in Peking, Shanghai, and Canton, and from these points the company operated in the many provinces. There was a small company in each city that took about making pictures in the neighborhood. "But to return to the movies in

China," added Mr. Brodsky. "There are infinite possibilities there which have not as yet been developed. I think there is a great future for the cinema. The industry has just barely begun in the nation. Putting the movies in China, I must confess, is a fascinating experiment."

"Before the China Cinema Company put in its appearance in the coast cities, American films were in some vogue. The advent of the first Charlie Chaplin film in China really was amusing. The natives didn't think he was funny at first. Later they began to imitate him and soon Charlie Chaplin must have been as popular as they were in New York not so long ago. And let me say that there are some Chinamen who are just as funny as Charlie Chaplin ever was and can be quite as ludicrous in their actions before the camera or elsewhere as he can ever hope to be."

But Chaplin is about the only man that ever attained even a small degree of popularity in China. The Chinese do not seem to display interest in any one else. But the foreign population in the embassies and consulates can always be depended upon to patronize the American variety. That is why Mr. Brodsky has not a complete monopoly of the field, although his hold on the interior cities, so far as the employment of native talent and the taking of native made and native written scenarios are concerned, is practically unshaken.

The scenic beauties of China lend themselves admirably to the screen. Incidentally, while carrying out the motion picture project, Mr. Brodsky has been able to secure a wide and intimate view of the forbidden city of Peking. There are 10,000 feet of film in this collection, and it is said that the series will soon be shown in the United States.

About a year ago, at the time of the big Canton fair, the company opened their picture houses for a week and gave the proceeds to the flood sufferers. It was stipulated that the heads of the various States in which the theatres were located should sell the tickets for the benefit. Instead of doing this the Governors sent word to their Chambers of Commerce to dispose of the tickets even if they had to buy them themselves. The demand was backed by threats of dire penalties, but it accomplished the result. More than \$10,000 in tickets were sold.

Under the terms of the agreement granted the China Cinema Company, Ltd., Mr. Brodsky receives a salary of "not less than \$500 a month," in return for which he has complete charge of the administration of its affairs, assisted by the before mentioned "consulting committee" of Chinamen, who are, in effect, what would correspond to a board of directors.

The growth of the motion picture industry in Japan contrasts strangely with that of China. There was a solid foundation of education among the masses to receive them. But in China just the opposite is the case. Comparatively rapid, though, as the growth of the industry has been, it will be a long time before the movies in China will reach anywhere near the size which the business has grown to in the United States and other countries. But it will come in the end, Mr. Brodsky fully believes.

Despite the fact that the motion pictures taken in China are essentially Chinese, there is a certain interest in them from the American standpoint, for here, as perhaps in no other country, is the viewpoint so complicated. The Chinese can and do appreciate them and undoubtedly if the same pictures were shown in the United States they might receive a hearty reception from the American movie fans.

Mr. Brodsky says he has no immediate intention of bringing pictures of his China trip to the United States. He is content to go on enlarging a field where he knows his ground is firm, and he has just begun "putting the movies in China," only a very small percentage of the population of that great nation has been educated in the pictures. Hundreds of millions have yet to know what a moving picture really is.

If in five or six years 100 motion picture theatres have been opened in China," says Mr. Brodsky, "will the rate of increase be greater in proportion during the next half decade? It is hard to figure that out on a mathematical basis and much of course will depend on the proportionate increase of education among the natives. "There are large areas that we are simply unable to reach and we have to content ourselves with movie touring the high spots of the largest cities of the interior."

LITTLE STORIES OF LIFE IN THE BIG CITY

"A ham sandwich and a bottle of beer," he queried. "Yes," smiled the Count. "One ham sandwich and a bottle of beer," repeated the tall waiter again, "that is all that I need for my dinner." "One ham sandwich and a bottle of beer," said the boy slowly as he wrote on the pad.

The pair bowed respectfully and withdrew. The reporter recovered sufficiently to go on with the interview. "You take my seat," said a spry old man in the subway to a tired young woman who had just come in to stand clinging to a strap in front of him. "Oh, my! No," said the young woman, smilingly, but she sat down at the old man's smiling but unmistakable insistence, and he was glad she did. Still, as a matter of fact, this old man had not always been so ready to give his seat to a woman; but since his own daughter had begun going to business this whole giving up your

seat question had appeared to him in a new light. "Sometimes, when she came home at night, she would tell about her experiences coming up in the subway, telling of these things not complainingly but rather as if something that interested her, though sometimes she was moved to speak a little indignantly. She had learned many things in her subway travels; she discovered what car to take in a train and where to stand in it with the best chance of getting a seat when people get off at stations, and so now she is rather more likely to get a seat than when she first began going downtown; but still her experiences have been to this old man, to put it mildly, disturbing; and they set him thinking.

Had he always been to other men's daughters as polite as he might have been? He is so now, anyway. It was his own daughter for that he was thinking when he gave up his seat to that young woman in the train.

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